

Details on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Written by Mike Honda
Thursday, 14 January 2010 17:06

A few weeks ago, I wrote about the introduction of H.R. 4321, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009 (CIR ASAP), a comprehensive immigration reform bill introduced in the House of Representatives. My post was met with dozens of well-articulated and thoughtful responses from the Constituents of California's 15th District. Many of these comments revolved around the desire to know more about the bill, what my position on reform is, and questions regarding the inclusion of my bill, H.R. 2709, the Reuniting Families Act, within CIR ASAP. As such, I would like to take this opportunity to share details of H.R.4321, and some of the reasons why I support it. Further, on this page, you will find a link to a section-by-section bill summary and to the entire bill text.

It is my belief that America needs and deserves an immigration system that is practical and conducive to enhancing America's security and prosperity; helps keep families together; and is consistent with our immigrant roots and values. I believe that CIR ASAP creates an immigration system that achieves these goals. This bill provides thoughtful and humane solutions to many of the problems faced by our broken immigration system. These "fixes" are not only necessary to address the plight of millions of our friends and neighbors living in the shadows, but are also critical to strengthening our economy and keeping our country safe.

Some highlights of the bill include:

Strengthening Border Security and Enforcement

Securing and protecting American communities is of the utmost importance. Consistent with this goal, the proposed comprehensive immigration reform includes two critical additions to our

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ability to do so. Specifically, H.R. 4321 creates a Southern Border Security Task Force composed of federal, state, and local law enforcement officers focused on sharing timely information and standards to prevent violence and crime from entering the homeland. Additionally, the legislation provides resources to ensure that Customs and Border patrol have modern and effective technology and equipment, adequate personnel equipment, as well as other necessary tools to protect our borders and ports of entry. This section also promotes partnerships between the U.S. and other nations to combat criminal activity, develop sensible enforcement policies, and minimize the environmental impacts of border security infrastructure activities.

Furthermore, this bill will require the Department of Homeland Security to meet minimum requirements to ensure the humane treatment of detainees, and protects family unity through the promotion of alternatives to detention, and restores due process protections for vulnerable populations.

Finally, this bill deals with needed changes to our immigration enforcement policies by protecting our workers, repealing the controversial 287(g) program and ensuring the enforcement of federal immigration law lies solely with the federal government.

Creating a More Effective and Fair Legal Immigration Process

I am particularly proud that CIR ASAP has incorporated H.R. 2709, the Reuniting Families Act I

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introduced in June 2009. We need to reform our visa system to get rid of lengthy backlogs and ensure family reunification remains a cornerstone of our immigration system. This bill would recapture unused employment-based and family-sponsored visas from 1992-2008 and roll them over to the next year. It would also reclassify the spouses and children of lawful permanent residents as immediate relatives and exempt them from annual limits. Further, this section increases the number of visas which may be issued annually to a certain country. Finally, this bill will increase the discretion of immigration judges – a change critical to protecting children and families, refugees, and asylees.

Earned Legalization for Qualified Undocumented Persons

H.R. 4321 proposes to create a conditional nonimmigrant status for those individuals who meet certain requirements which include contributions of the U.S. , a fine, and complete criminal and security background checks. This legislation is an important step to creating effective and consistent comprehensive immigration reform that meets the needs of our economy, strengthens our legal immigration process, and reflects our history of immigration and rule of law.

Meeting the Skill Needs of the U.S. Economy

H.R. 4321 allows employers to submit an employment-based visa petition for employees from select highly skilled categories by exempting these requests from the employment-based visa

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caps. Our economy direly needs to add highly skilled workers so that we can remain competitive in the increasingly technology-based global market. We continue to lose too many U.S. educated and trained highly skilled workers due to the visa caps and ineffective family backlog.

This bill will also create an innovative commission on immigration and labor markets that will take a critical look at the ebbs and flows of our employment-based immigration. The Commission will use the information it collects to make recommendations to Congress and the President regarding the future flows of workers.

Integration of New Americans

This section of the bill helps ensure citizenship in the United States remains attainable and accessible for all those who are interested. It will monitor immigration fees and create integration grant programs for community-based organizations for programs that help others with the complicated naturalization process. This bill incorporates language from H.R. 3249, the Strengthen and Unite Communities with Civics Education and English Skills Act of 2009, which I introduced in July 2009, through the provision of tax credits for teachers of English Language Learners and for businesses that provide their employees with opportunities to take qualified English language education programs.

For more information, please follow the links below:

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[Bill Text](#)

[Bill Summary](#)